

The Western Seminary Bulletin

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

VOL. VIII, NO. 1

HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

MAY, 1954

The Christian Hope and The Meaning of History

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One of the most persistent concerns of all thinking persons is to discover some fabric of meaning in the tangle of human history. To many such persons this is more than a concern; it is a passion. Many who have no formal philosophic interest feel that life is scarcely worth the effort to live it if day-to-day experience is not somehow related to a meaningful context. Whether that meaning is to be found in a context wholly present, or in a far-off future event of fulfillment, makes little difference for the concern itself. The important thing is that present experience has over against it some transcendent frame of reference, some power which takes up the multitude of single elements in a day's, or year's, or lifetime's, experience, and makes it a significant whole. For many people there is no greater terror than the acknowledgement of meaninglessness. Suicide seems the only logical "next step" to those who have trodden the path of nihilism this far. It is ironical that the completely negativistic type of modern existentialism, such as that represented by Sartre, finds it necessary to structure and program its concept of meaninglessness, and in so doing, violates its own conclusions. This is, of course, a kind of impossible alternative to suicide.

The problem of meaning in history is in a real sense a problem of coherence. Coherence is here defined as "connection or congruity arising from some common principle or relationship," as by a subordination to one purpose or idea. This is an historical understanding of "meaning" in the sense that throughout history meaning has been found in history by the people of many different cultures when they have been able to find coherence, or a general principle of coherence, uniting in some way the jumble of data presented by life. It is interesting to observe that Karl Löwith in his excellent volume, *Meaning in History*, defines "meaning" more narrowly as purpose, and suggests that the two terms may be used interchangeably (p. 5). He remarks that it is mainly purpose which constitutes meaning for us. Purpose is not inherent in, but transcends, a thing. History is meaningful if it has a transcendent purpose "beyond the actual facts." The meaning of historical events becomes evident "only when their *telos* becomes apparent." If the entire course of history is considered, meaning is found in terms of an ultimate purpose. That is, if history has an ultimate meaning, there must be "a final purpose or goal transcending the actual events" (p. 6). Hebrew-Christian thought, he says, has given us this identification of meaning with ultimate purpose. There are other systems of meaning, such as that involved in the cyclical view of the Greeks, but they do not demand a comprehensive view of history directed toward "an ultimate end in a transcendent purpose." We shall have

occasion to return to this special sense of the term "meaning." We are using the broader term "coherence" now because it is a much more inclusive term when one thinks of what the generality of mankind was concerned to find in the flux of events. Some "systems of meaning" sought purpose in the web of experience; some did not. All sought coherence.

In discussing the function of religion in his book, *The World's Living Religions*, R. E. Hume remarked that "Religion gives to a person what he can obtain from no other source, — a confidence in the outcome of life's struggles through a personal connection with the superior Power or powers in the world" (p. 2). It is rather obvious that the religion of most of the earth's peoples gave this confidence, not in any pattern of rational coherence, but in a program of cultus and belief in which devotees found themselves related, in the way of their participation, to a scheme of things grasped rather by some kind of religious sense than by the intellect. There was, in a great many instances, a deep conviction that whatever meaning life held, either proximately or ultimately, it was to be found in the explanation of reality afforded by the religion in which one's fortunes were bound up. In the nature of the case, different religions were more or less comprehensive in their principle of explanation, some limiting themselves to a relatively few elements, others pressing all things into a coherent whole. Oriental religion has provided no sense of history in the sense in which it has been known in Western civilization. But the former's very a-historical point of view is in itself a judgment upon the ability of the historical process itself to furnish a coherent sense or meaning. Meaning has to be found in a transcendent principle above history, but even in Western civilization the attempts to make history yield its own meaning, without, so to speak, "outside help," have resulted in failure.

The most ambitious claims for ultimate meaning and coherence have been made by persons who call themselves philosophic idealists. The idealist posits a total web of meaning, a total context in which all single factors find their true or ultimate significance. Meaning depends upon a comprehensive context of meaning in an Absolute. All facts, of whatever kind, must be translated into, or interpreted as, logical meanings. Idealism, in its absolute and dualistic forms, has been a very great temptation to many Christian thinkers. It offers a very respectable "something" the Bible does not offer at all. It posits the ability of the rational mind, entirely apart from any kind of "special revelation," to discover an ultimate, unifying principle which is able to gather the totality of experience into a meaningful whole. The

The Western Seminary Bulletin

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
FACULTY OF THE SEMINARY
HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

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secular philosopher calls it the Absolute; the Christian thinker calls it God. Though Pascal said God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not the God of the philosophers, many a Christian rationalist has felt that, though this remark was a rather fine piece of piety for its time, it was a bit too naive to be taken as a necessary restraint upon the joint philosophic and religious quest for the principle of ultimate meaning. Barth and others have questioned whether Christianity as the faith of the biblical revelation has not been rather seriously betrayed by such well-meaning Christian rationalists. More deeply, has not Jesus Christ himself been betrayed, since the claim of Christian faith is that he is the *only* mediator between God and man, the only one who was able, by his death and resurrection, to give man the knowledge of ultimate meaning through his redemptive program? If man can, by seeking, find out God, does not Christ as the Truth have a lesser significance than that given him by the Church?

Human history has been called upon, again and again, to witness various socio-economic quests for the principle of ultimate coherence. It would be a laborious task even to list all such schemes dreamed by man as panaceas for the troubles of mankind. Most of them have been adjuncts of this or that philosophy of religion, or a rather integral part of the same. Few have claimed to be able to stand without the assistance of religious sanctions; that is, until Marxist Communism arose. The "hope" proffered the world by Communism today poses the greatest single threat to Christian faith and the hope it presents. Both in its present guarantees of creature satisfactions, and in its dream of an ultimate classless society, it offers a conclusion about the facts of experience, many of them harsh, which millions find irresistible, at least for a time. About this Communism, which has its own soteriology in the doctrine of the proletariat, its own ecclesiology in its doctrine of the Party, and its own eschatology in its theory of history, the Second Report of the Advisory Commission on the Theme of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches has the following to say:

Marxist-Leninist theory asserts that in a unique way it gives those who accept it a purchase-hold on the actual course of history, an infallible insight into what is really

going on. . . . It is this vision of what (*necessarily*, for the communist) lies beyond the struggle, which is held to justify all and every action taken in its name. None can gainsay the power of this vision over the actions of those who profess it. Even the most superficial study of communist propaganda today reveals the determination with which it endeavours to make a corner in optimism!

In the foregoing we have presented only a few of the "hopes" by which men have lived in the past, and by which millions live today. They are representative of the innumerable attempts made by man to unify his experience under some great all-explanatory principle. They are no small reason why the World Council of Churches has determined to consider what the Christian hope is, over against every other vaunted hope, and how that Christian hope may be presented most effectively to our terribly confused contemporary world. To this matter of the Christian hope and meaning of history we now turn.

The meaning of history is found in a person who is called "Christ our hope." I Timothy 1:1 expresses this faith simply as the "Lord Jesus Christ, our hope." Thus, where Christ is, there is hope. To be without Christ is to be without hope. In Ephesians 2:12 the Apostle Paul speaks of the time before and the time after the Ephesians had faith in Christ. "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, *having no hope*, and without God in the world." Now, in Christ, they have hope. It should be carefully noted that the Christian hope is not found in a theory of history, nor in a principle, nor in some kind of metaphysical Absolute, but simply in a person. There may be theories, philosophies, theologies, and principles, which attempt to be explanatory of this person and his work, or of his significance, but these must always be regarded as relative, and subject to criticism and judgment. When they are allowed to take the place of the unique person, Jesus Christ, they quickly become, as Paul Tillich says, expressions of the "demonic."

When this person is spoken of as being the Christian hope, everything is included which revelation asserts him to be. That is, personality is not thought of here apart from what that personality is claimed to be, nor apart from what he is said to have done. By his entrance into the stream of human history, and with the events attendant upon that entrance, such as those involved in his life of perfect obedience to his heavenly Father, his sacrificial and atoning death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and his departure with promise to return, he has become for Christian faith the very center of history and the one by whom the ultimate meaning of history is revealed. It has always been most difficult for the Church to protect the uniqueness of the person and work of Jesus Christ from encroachments of both ecclesiasticisms and theologies. At different times in the Christian centuries one or the other has been quite ready to usurp his unique position as the only hope of the redeemed. It has become increasingly clear in our time that he "must be pre-eminent in all things."

We have spoken of faith in connection with the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Christian hope. This is, of course, a very great offense to the unbelieving world, that Christians should claim that it is by faith alone that they attain to this knowledge of the unique significance of Jesus Christ. How can such an idea attain respectability if it is not the product of rational investigation, un-

dertaken either by the rational powers alone, or in conjunction with certain religious sympathies which may be termed "faith"? But the Christian contention is that the "natural mind" can not grasp these things, that the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit is required before they can be received as the very truth of God. And strangely, this truth is not come by except through the deep personal experience of the forgiveness of sins. Faith brings one into a personal relationship with Christ as Redeemer and Lord, and thus in the existential experience achieved by God in and through the believer's response, Christ becomes firmly fixed as the only possible hope for time and eternity.

Jesus Christ has both a present and a future relevance for the meaning of history. For the Christian, faith-knowledge yields the conviction that both meaning and coherence, in the ultimate sense, are to be found only in him. That is why, for us historically conditioned persons, he can be the only hope. But the Bible does not limit this unique significance of Jesus Christ to believers in some atomistic way. Rather, Jesus Christ has a cosmic significance, as well as a personal relationship to each believer, and a corporate relationship to his Body, which is the Church. Colossians puts it thus: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by him and for him. . . . By him all things consist." It is said that he will "reconcile all things to himself . . . whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." I Corinthians 15 is a powerful statement of the fact of Christian faith and conviction that when Christ shall have brought all things in subjection to himself, he will deliver the kingdom to the Father.

Hope always has a future reference: "the expectation of some good thing." For centuries it was believed by Christians that the Christian hope applied exclusively to the distant future, that is, to the time of Christ's second coming, or return. One of the fine achievements of the study commissions of the World Council is the new emphasis upon the understanding that both the present and the distant future are bound up in the Christian hope, the two based upon what Christ has done in the past and what, according to his promise, he will do in the future. They are not two separate hopes, but one Christian hope pointing to both present and future. As the Zetten, Holland, conference reported: "Only if we are sure of the present realization can we confidently look forward to the future fulfilment; only in so far as we hope for the future fulfilment do we rightly apprehend the meaning of Christ's victory here and now." In the light of this faith, the great problem confronting the Church today is how to persuade the world to leave its false hopes and to entrust itself to the Christian hope alone.

The missionary and evangelistic task of the Church is "to preach the gospel to every creature." The present meaning of Jesus Christ for the individual believer and for the Church must be brought, in the most effective ways that can be found, to the peoples of the earth. Though we recognize that it is only by the power and grace of God, operating through his love, that this can be achieved, we know also that he has been pleased to accomplish this through us. But if our own convictions regarding the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in his saviour-

hood and lordship have not been acquired by way of intellectualistic deductions or inductions, we can not expect that others will attain to these convictions by that route. We shall have to preach and teach faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in as simple and direct a manner as is possible. Only when he is received in faith does he become for the believer the wisdom and righteousness of God, sanctification, and redemption (I Cor. 1:30); only then does he become the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), indeed, "the way, the truth, and the life." Only then can it be understood what Paul means when he says, that all things are "brought to a focus" in Christ (Eph. 1:10, *Interpreter's Bible*).

Jesus Christ fulfils history and gives it its ultimate meaning by finally overwhelming and then bringing to complete destruction the powers of evil in the world, and at the same time vindicating the faith of those who are his own. In so doing he negates, not history itself, but the diabolical forces which had used history for the actualizing of their purposes. With the vindication of the faith of the righteous comes the establishment of the time-process as the proper sphere for the unhindered enjoyment of the fellowship of God with his people. The "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" is not an entirely new reality, but the old completely renewed. The stage of history remains fundamentally the same. With the return of Christ comes also the resurrection of the body, not an entirely new individuality in each case, but the identical person laid to rest, but now freed of all the weaknesses, corruptions, and frailties to which the flesh is now heir. The individual who was privileged to enjoy some tokens of redemption now, who now has "the earnest of the Spirit," attains redemption's full capacities. He who could be called a "saint" now, since he shared the righteousness of Christ and was separated unto God, receives the fulfilment of the same righteousness in a status which can never again know the clouding of sin. In the presence of the manifestation of the glory of God, the individual himself receives glory. There is much of mystery enveloping these terms, and humble faith requires the recognition that the best of earth's symbols are faulty emblems of that which awaits the final unveiling. Thus does ultimate meaning come, and thus also ultimate coherence, when all things are "summed up" in Christ. It is discovered then that history is no Absolute, but derives its meaning from the fact that it is the created sphere of dynamic process which must finally come under the sovereign sway of the Lord of both creation and history. It is this hope and confidence which the Church, in the power and grace of God, must declare to the world today.

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Natural Theology According to Emil Brunner

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It is essential that such an undertaking as this be prefaced by some definition of terms, or in this case of the term. The encyclopedia defines "natural theology" as "that knowledge of God's existence and nature which mankind learns from observation of the world of nature." From our reading in Brunner, we feel that the source of this knowledge, as given in this definition, should be expanded to include any innate capacity in human reason and any a priori principles in human consciousness. Having thus broadened our definition we see that the crucial point now lies with the word "nature." We ask ourselves just what degree or extent of knowledge of God's nature is intended here. Further delineation in this direction, however, must be seen in the theologian himself, since to define the scope of the term is the burden of this paper.

Since the exact definition of the term "natural theology" is determined by one's interpretation of the extent of knowledge of God involved, we shall begin by examining the possibility of any sort of natural theology, as it is found in the writings of Emil Brunner.

The first area of possibility we shall consider is that of human reason. We begin then by asking, to what extent is unaided, human reason capable of knowledge of God? Brunner does not answer this question with a blanket statement about the total incapacity of human reason. As a matter of fact, he has a great deal of respect for the validity of rational thought. Reason is for him, the universal arbiter to which we can and should appeal always in all circumstances. He does not believe that faith should be set up as a sacrifice of the intellect as is so often done.¹ The object of faith, God's revelation, always passes through a process of understanding by men. Although it may create a new understanding, it does so by laying claim upon the natural understanding. Revelation must necessarily use human speech, words, grammar, and the images of man's life and world. Therefore, all genuine theology must be dialectical. Revelation does not extinguish human reason but claims it wholly.² Thus reason becomes a reliable test of revelation but valid only as to negative conclusions.³ In the realm of positive conclusions it must be said that reason has a certain knowledge of God. However, it is not the living God which it knows. It is a confused and uncertain perception—a kind of "twilight knowledge."

We turn now to the possibility of a natural theology based on general revelation. Brunner defined general revelation as "the universal revelation of God in Creation, history and especially in the human conscience."⁴ Revelation in creation must, however, be distinguished from natural, rational knowledge of God. The consistent witness of the Bible and the very Christian idea of creation insist on the reality of revelation in creation. Hence, Brunner shows that we must accept the fact of at least a degree of reflection of the Creator in his works. Does this not mean that we are bound to acknowledge the possibility of a natural theology? Brunner answers with an emphatic, "No." These two need not be bound together as some have imagined. Denial of the possibility of a natural theology does not demand a conse-

quent denial of the reality of revelation in creation. However, Brunner points out, "natural theologies" do exist. They are an "anthropological fact." He refers here to Romans 1:19ff. This passage, he believes, shows that the basis of guilt lies in the fact of general revelation which reveals "something" to all men about the creator. Sinful though we be, we cannot help but have thoughts about God, because of his revelation in creation.⁵ The perception and use of this revelation will be considered under the limitations of a natural knowledge of God.

There is another element in general revelation which Brunner considers at some length. This is the "image of God" in man. General revelation, he believes, has its basis in the original image of God and the responsible relationship which man has to God. Even in his sinful state man retains responsibility and also something of God's image.⁶ We see vestiges of this image, man's lost origin, in that, apart from revelation, the human spirit formulates the idea of God or the idea of the absolute. Brunner develops this idea in his conception of the "point of contact." The heart of man is no *tabula rasa*. The law of God is naturally written into the heart of man.⁷ From these vestiges of God's image and the fact of revelation in creation arise the responsibility of man over against his Creator.

Up to this point, we have considered the term "natural theology" in its broadest meaning. Now, as we take up the consideration of the limitations of a natural knowledge of God, we shall delineate clearly the limits of the term. We shall also see just what Brunner feels is the extent of natural knowledge of the "nature" of God. The first consideration in this area, I have entitled "natural limitations." By this, I refer to those factors lying in the very nature of things, which, Brunner feels, restrict our knowledge of God (e.g. the limits of finite rational powers). Brunner develops many proofs of natural limitations to a natural knowledge of God, apparently to show that general revelation is insufficient even if we could read it aright. He seems to take the point of view of Albrecht Ritschl that the famous proofs for God's existence which begin outside of personal Christianity can never bring one inside. We can only truly "know" God in the measure that he makes himself known to us.⁸ Brunner declares that the God who can be proved is not the God of faith. Proofs are of no concern for faith; they do not lead us to the Lord who reveals himself to man.⁹ The personal God, who is the ground of all truth, cannot be known as personal by means of ideas but only by personal, concrete revelation.¹⁰ Brunner believes that not only Christianity but all religion has in common the principle: "Through God alone can God be known." This statement does not, however, clearly define Brunner's position. One who believes the truth of this statement might conceivably restrict God's self-disclosure to the realm of nature. Then we should have a revelation of the sort intended by a philosophy of religion and religious speculation: that divine Presence behind all phenomena which shines through these phenomena. Religion for such constitutes merely the realization on the human side of this all-pervading divine reali-

ry. Over against this conception of revelation, Brunner places the true Christian sense which connects God's self-disclosure indissolubly with a unique historical fact. This constitutes the "special" element in Brunner's description of revelation. Thus, for him, general revelation must always be considered as an indirect revelation. The relation between it and special revelation is never complementary. The "natural man's" knowledge apart from Christ is not half the truth but distorted truth.¹¹ For it is through the Biblical revelation that we discover that the God we learned to know through our own efforts is not God at all, precisely because it is through our own efforts, the natural's attempt to grasp the supernatural.¹²

Brunner further develops these "natural" limitations to a knowledge of God by a consideration of the ideas of "object" and "subject." He feels that we cannot know God as the object of our thought. This kind of knowing is only possible with regard to the finite. God is the absolute, unconditioned Subject. He is absolute person and absolute mystery. Therefore, he can be known through self-revelation alone. To elucidate this concept, Brunner uses the analogy of our knowledge of another person. We do not truly "know" a person when he is conceived as the object of our thoughts. It is only as such an one becomes a personal subject, an initiator of action or thought in relation to us, that we can say we know him as a personality. So too, it is only as God initiates a personal relationship with us that we have any hope of knowing him.¹³ God is not and cannot be the object of thought. He is the Subject, the "I" who addresses us as "thou." God is the personality who acts toward us.¹⁴

Again, Brunner feels that the absolute of thought cannot be equated with God. This "absolute" is not truly mysterious because it can be thought, and God can never be "found" by thought.¹⁵ The scientific mind in its approach to religion treats Christian doctrine and dogma as facts which can be made the objects of scientific inquiry. This method can, however, never define Christian doctrine. It can only "classify its elements."¹⁶ Natural laws are not absolutes; behind and above them there is divine freedom. These laws serve God's purpose but they do not give us an ultimate expression or understanding of God's purpose.¹⁷ The "something" with which Christian doctrine is concerned cannot be taught by man for it transcends all human doctrine. By his own knowledge, all that man can grasp is the world. God is not the world; he stands outside it. From this fact arises the need for revelation.¹⁸ And this revelation must be and is in its very nature supernatural. It is absolute manifestation of something which has been absolutely concealed. Its content lies completely outside the area of possible human attainment by means of observation, research and thought.¹⁹

Man, says Brunner, cannot know God and his nature except he know himself. He can only truly know himself by regarding himself from a point "above" man. The only genuine "above" is in God himself and this point of view is given us in God's self-revelation.²⁰ For this reason all theological thought must operate within the dimension of revelation, the "I-thou" relation.²¹

Having considered an area of Brunner's thinking which we chose to call "natural limitations," we now turn to another strong motif in his works: limitations of

natural knowledge of God resulting from sin. Brunner feels that all mankind must, if it thinks, catch intimations of a fundamental contradiction in human nature. There is in man the "higher" than the rest of creation and opposed to this the "misery" peculiar to man. However, being engulfed in this contradiction, man cannot know its origin or explain its presence.²² The Christian view of man has a concrete, though unpleasant, explanation for this contradiction in human nature: the fact of sin. This fact is the prime limiting factor in all "human" knowledge of God. For it stands between man and God's revelation in nature. Brunner states clearly and unequivocally that where a man supports natural theology as valid, correct knowledge, he is denying the reality of sin or at least its effects in the sphere of knowledge of God.²³ He stands firm on this belief that without Scripture as a guide we cannot interpret God's revelation in creation aright. That is not to say that general revelation has been destroyed by sin; the Creator is still reflected in his works, but sin has frustrated the actual knowledge of God through that revelation.²⁴

Brunner points out the difficulty which the modern man has with the fact of human sin. His intellectual, philosophical self-assurance is based on a belief in the goodness of his own nature. The acknowledgment of the existence of radical evil in himself would undermine his basic principle and destroy his self-assurance. The first direction of faith in revelation and acknowledgment of sin is backward (back to God). This is against the nature of self-assurance which fancies itself going forward and reaching out to God. So-called "Modern Theology," with its gospel of Jesus rather than concerning Jesus, stems from a denial of evil and the consequent necessity for a divine self-disclosure. For this self-disclosure shows the error in its reasoning and subsequently limits and controls it. So too, in the natural theologian certain elements are tied together: the failure to see sin as separation from God; the consequent belief that union with God is possible without redemption; self-assurance that he can attain that union without redemption; all resulting in the rejection of the fact of divine intervention for redemption. Over against these views, Brunner declares that we must see with Immanuel Kant that evil is a positive, active resistance to good (or God). Such an apprehension of the true character of sin will certainly make an impact on man's smug self-assurance and his trust in natural reason. Original sin for Brunner is more than the after-effect of our animal past (Schleiermacher). It is a "cosmic potency" as well as a "moral" phenomenon. It is not only a determination of the will but is equally a determination of existence, of the being of humanity itself as it now is. As Brunner conceives of the Christian concept of sin, it is primarily something which effects the nature of man as a whole. It is not an external act but is rooted in the depths of my nature. So might I see that "I" am really bad in whatever I do. Sin is not simply "not coming together" but it is the actual movement of going away. We see the personal, existential significance of sin in that it is against God. The breaking of the original, personal relationship with God has caused distortion and separation because of guilt.²⁵

Brunner seems to feel at times the great dilemma of man in his sin. Evil and guilt can only be seriously spoken of as realities on the ground of revelation. That is, the knowledge of sin is possible only in the pres-

ence of God. However, the pride which the natural man takes in his goodness and rational powers renders him impervious to God's revelation and the resultant true knowledge of God and self.²⁶ The very term "sinner" implies, for Brunner, an original revelation. For without some knowledge of God's will there is no sin. Sin, therefore, implies an original knowledge but also a turning from that knowledge and its loss.²⁷ While we must take cognizance of a degree of validity in human reason, we must also recognize that apart from the Word of God it is not able to perceive the true being of man, since this is impossible without knowledge of the true being of God. Sin has so dimmed man's vision that in place of God he sets up imaginary gods. He turns God's revelation in creation into images of false gods and idols.²⁸ Such is the dilemma of human existence. Such is the dimness and distortion of natural knowledge of God.

In the above considerations we have dealt with the possibility and limitations of natural knowledge of God. We wish to conclude our discussion of Brunner's views with a positive statement of the nature of true knowledge of God.

Under this head we wish first to discuss Brunner's emphasis on revealed religion. In our day, he says, we have a civilization which allows no place for the fact of revelation. All that is to be accepted as true must lie within the perceptions of the senses or the conclusions of logic. There are some clearly defined reasons for this contemporary skepticism toward revelation. They are: 1) The church's claims to facts as revealed truth which have now been proven false; 2) Fifteen hundred years of state-church suppression; and 3) The fantastic claims made under the cloak of revelation. However, in spite of these personally humiliating causes of skepticism toward revelation, recent catastrophic events have awakened man to a distrust of himself as "the measure" and opened a way for some receptivity toward revelation.²⁹ This has somewhat broken the barrier of a desire for independence from God's self-revelation and from God himself. This desire for independence is the essential spirit of a natural theology. Brunner feels that this kind of independence leads away from God into bondage by the world. True freedom is not in independence from God but in dependence upon him.³⁰ To "believe" is to be dependent, to be dragged out of all self-securities and to have security only in God.³¹

What then is this revelation, this divine self-disclosure to which mankind must turn? Brunner emphasizes again and again the "uniqueness," the *eph hapax* character of revelation. Into the world of men with their ethics, their metaphysics, and their religions, there has entered something different, something distinguished qualitatively and fundamentally from everything which man can know from himself outward, something different in source and content: the Word of God.³² It is just this unique character of God's self-disclosure which is the "stumbling block" in Christianity. Brunner sees a great source of humiliation for the natural man in that eternal truth and everlasting salvation has to be connected with an historical fact which took place once for all and that he is dependent upon the historical Christ to approach God, unable to go directly.³³ This is due to the fundamental difference between Christianity and philosophy.

Philosophy assumes that ultimate validity belongs to the "mental grounds" developed by "natural reason." Christianity recognizes its ground to be in the extra-rational area of revelation. This is not only the *ground* of theology, but is also its fundamental presupposition, its content and its standard. Either revelation supplies its own grounds or it is not revelation.³⁴ In this fact, that revelation is the sole ground of knowledge of God, lies the need for "witness." Men must witness to God's self-disclosure as the only source of the "truth which makes men free."³⁵

On the other side of the ledger, Brunner points out that we must remain agnostic aside from revelation; not an agnosticism of indifference but one of reverence.³⁶ I recall a conversation with a sincere, admitted atheist in which we tried to approach knowledge or at least acknowledgment of God through reason. When we arrived at the top rung of the ladder of rational thought, I witnessed to my answer, based on faith, for the unsolved questions. His response was, "The difference between you and me is that I go only as far as I can be sure; you go beyond what you can prove." For the first time I saw in bold relief the truth of which Brunner speaks. We must recognize the purely supernatural source of the content of our faith and must remain reverently agnostic in areas where God has not spoken.

Firmly believing that the problem of natural theology is essentially the struggle between faith and reason, I have chosen to include in these positive views, Brunner's statements on the relation between faith and reason.

Christian faith, says Brunner, is dealing with something very different from the datum of reason. It has to do with a knowledge of God which in no way is founded by man, knowledge "from beyond" all human possibilities. He then shows how the content of faith knowledge and rational knowledge of God differ in their very character. The formulations of reason concerning God are all general (universal), timeless and impersonal. Those of faith are not general, are based on the historical, and are personal.³⁷

Yet genuine faith and critical reason cannot be diametrically opposed to each other for they were created for each other by God.³⁸ We must never hold, claims Emil Brunner, that faith and reason are external to each other, for this would mean a duality of truth; if we believe simply that faith has a place without reason, we are never Christian; we must hold that reason has a place within faith.³⁹

The pride of intellect, present in all men, revolts against such a claim, however. It refuses to believe that any truth may lie outside the realm of reason.⁴⁰ So it is that autonomous reasoning shuts itself up within itself, closing out the divine revelation.⁴¹ Thus Brunner sees an ethical element in the struggle between a natural theology of reason and a revealed theology of faith. The natural theology is based on pride of human ability. The revealed theology humiliates man by showing him his inability to know God and claiming that justification by faith alone is the only means by which he can approach God.⁴² Against such pride of men Brunner makes this well-known statement, "Superficiality makes its own God—a God who is of the kind it likes."⁴³ We see that the essence of Brunner's opposition to natural theology is the same as the burden of any evangelical message. One

must break down the barrier of pride in reason to gain entrance for humility in faith. For only as a humble believer is the thinker in a position to think theologically.⁴⁴ Thoughtful considerations and attempts to understand his faith are inevitable for the Christian thinker but the starting point must be from within the faith relationship.⁴⁵ "Faith is the reason which is opened to that which lies beyond reason."⁴⁶

1. *The Mediator*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), pp. 42-43.
2. *Revelation and Reason*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 1946, pp. 15-16.
3. *The Philosophy of Religion*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1937, p. 74.
4. *The Mediator*, p. 32.
5. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 1950, pp. 132-134.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.
7. *Man in Revolt*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1939, pp. 241 and 537.
8. H. R. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology*, (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1952), p. 145.
9. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 149-150.
10. *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 16.
11. *The Mediator*, p. 21.
12. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 118.
13. *Revelation and Reason*, p. 24.
14. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 139.
15. *Revelation and Reason*, p. 24.

16. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 97.
17. *Christianity and Civilization*, (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 24.
18. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 14.
19. *Revelation and Reason*, p. 23.
20. *Man in Revolt*, p. 64.
21. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 141.
22. *Man in Revolt*, p. 82.
23. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 133.
24. *Man in Revolt*, p. 530.
25. *The Mediator*, pp. 122-151.
26. *The Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 73 and 78.
27. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 17.
28. *Man in Revolt*, p. 529.
29. *Revelation and Reason*, pp. 5-7.
30. *Christianity and Civilization*, Chap. IX.
31. *The Word and the World*, (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1932), p. 32.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
33. *The Mediator*, p. 42.
34. *The Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 13-16.
35. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 15.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
37. *The Word and the World*, pp. 16-34.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
39. *The Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 55-56.
40. *The Mediator*, p. 42.
41. *Man in Revolt*, p. 243.
42. *The Mediator*, pp. 43-44.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 468.
44. *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 17.
45. *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 96.
46. *Man in Revolt*, p. 247.

Communism in Action

EDWIN W. KOEPPE

In this article it is not my purpose to write on the basis of Communist teachings and propaganda, but on the basis of eighteen months of experience under Communist rule and after thirty years of observation of Communist propaganda and infiltration into Chinese society, institutions, army, and government. Out of this experience I wish to discuss Communism in action from a Christian point of view under the following topics: 1. Religion; 2. Church; 3. School; 4. Family; 5. Land—Farmers; 6. Taxes; 7. Business; 8. Laboring Man; 9. Indoctrination (Brain Washing); 10. Police; 11. Individual.

The fundamental difficulties of Communism have their roots in religion and religious beliefs. They are materialistic atheists. You cannot be recommended for membership into the Communist Party unless you are an atheist. This is also the reason for our difficulty to understand the plans, the motives, the contradictions, and the fanaticism of the Communists. It is very difficult for us, who have a Christian background with a Christian training, a belief in God who has revealed himself and has given us his law, to understand the reasoning and conclusions of the Communists who have no God. They consider all religions, not only Christianity, to be superstition. To them religion stands in the way of the Party and all its plans. They would wipe it out at once if they could. It is the instrument used, they say, by imperialists and imperialistic nations to prepare the way for conquest. They cannot understand any higher motive because they have no God. From that point of view they attack all missionaries and accuse them of being spies of imperialistic

nations, of bringing religion as an opiate to put the Chinese people to sleep so that they will not be aware of the real motives of all missionaries, viz., to prepare the way for imperialistic nations to conquer. Of these imperialistic nations America was always proclaimed to be the worst and the greatest.

Their position was forcefully stated by one of the Communist leaders in our city of Changchow. "You wish to reform conditions and to change the lives of men," he said, "and you pray for God's help to accomplish it. We don't need him. We can do it ourselves."

Since they have no God, they deny the existence of God's law, and the existence of a spiritual life, and the immortality of the soul. When these are denied then comes the question of what really is truth. If you have no God, what really is right and what is wrong? What is good and what is bad? What is a crime? What is an atrocity, if you have no God? Their materialistic atheism has led them into conclusions of what is truth; what is right and wrong; what is good and evil so that it is hard for us to understand them. We have almost no common ground to discuss problems and subjects. Back of all their plans and efforts stands the Party. Back of all of ours stands God.

The Communist's attitude and treatment of the Church and of the Chinese Christians is the result of their attitude towards religion. There is no place for religion and therefore no place for the Church in their program. In propaganda and in policy they have proclaimed freedom of religion and freedom of worship. They had proclaimed from Peking, before our section of China was

conquered, that since in South Fukien there was a larger percentage of Christians than in any other part of China, special treatment should be given to the churches and to church property. Actually conditions were created under which we could not recognize the freedom of religion. Never was anyone arrested because of his religion—not to my knowledge. The attacks were always indirect. "Yes," they said, "freedom of religion but also freedom to oppose religion. It would not be fair to have freedom of religion and not have freedom to oppose religion." When the Party is opposed to religion, when the officers and the police and the secret police are opposed, when all in authority are opposed and have the freedom to oppose religion, how much freedom is left? The number of ways in which they opposed and interfered with the churches and their worship are too numerous to mention. An extra tax was placed on the churches, not because they were a church, but because they were an organization and all organizations must be taxed. Visitation of the country churches and the holding of evangelistic meetings were not stopped, but one could not travel without a police pass and that was usually not given. Worship in the churches was not forbidden, but the church buildings were needed to store the "People's" rice (taxes), and were needed to hold Communist meetings. Pastors, elders and deacons were arrested, put in prison and some of them shot, not because they were leaders in the church, but because of some other false accusations brought against them. The churches in the city of Changchow after fifteen months of Communist rule were closed, not because of an order to have them closed, but because of an order that there were to be no meetings of any kind during the redistribution of the land, even though all the redistribution of the land was out in the villages and not in the city. The fact is that the church and the freedom of religion do not fit in with their atheistic program and they never will. I feel that they would wipe out the church tomorrow if they could, but they are afraid that they cannot. As they themselves said, "We must not make martyrs, for martyrs make the church grow."

The schools—mission schools, private schools, and government schools—were at once controlled by the Communist Party, but again indirectly. The principals and teachers were told to continue as before, but they were not allowed to resign. One of our principals, who insisted on resigning, was arrested and put in prison, but again not because he resigned, (so they said) but because he had other charges brought against him. The following day his wife was also arrested because she associated with a bad character—her husband. Schools were reorganized so that the principals and teachers were held responsible but were relieved of much of their authority. Orders were given, policies made, students controlled, curriculum changed, books replaced through the Party's educational bureau. The new books were translated from Russian text books. Confucius was declared to be a reactionary, his teachings denied and taken out of the schools. Chapel worship was no longer allowed in the chapel which was always used for Communist meetings. Later all religious meetings were forbidden on the campus. Communist meetings were held at which teachers and students were compelled to attend under roll call, and these meetings were usually held at the time of church services. In short from the very beginning the

schools (not the Theological Seminary) were made into centers of Communist propaganda, and that is what they are today.

The larger Chinese family and clan system with its ancestral worship has always been the strength of the Chinese society and the center of Confucius' teaching, but these do not fit in with the Communist Party and the police state any more than religion does. Under the larger family group the villages always enjoyed a form of local government by having their clan elders. This was at once changed. All were organized under the Party. Through their new text books children in the schools were taught that Confucius was wrong; it was not the duty of the children to obey their parents, but to watch them and to report them if they were "reactionaries." Whenever a father, reported by his son to be a reactionary, was arrested and shot, the son was heralded and lauded as a hero. The family and family life simply have no place in the Party's program and therefore must be undermined and changed. They are busy doing that in China today.

One of the biggest pieces of propaganda that was carried on by the Communists before they gained control was about land and landlords. The reason people are poor, they said, was that they had no land and when they got control there would be a redistribution of land so that everybody would have land. The ground work for this redistribution was begun sometime after the Communists came. Young teen-agers were trained to do the work. Farmers were classified into three groups according to the amount of land they owned. Those who held the most land, which in our section was seldom more than from three to five acres, were landlords. Most of them were arrested and put into prison during the redistribution. But the land was not really distributed. It became government owned and was then doled out for individuals to work at a 60 to 40 rate—60% going to the government. In our section where there is very little arable land, the amount that was given to one individual was $\frac{1}{3}$ of one acre. I know of some who would not receive it, because they said they could not make a living on that amount of land. Many of those who were classified as landlords were later given a public trial and shot.

Very closely linked up with the redistribution of land were the taxes. Taxes are never very welcome in any land, and in China the people always complained about them. Reduction in taxes, of course, had been promised by the Communists in their propaganda. What were taxes under their control? Let me state a few cases. The government collected 60% of the crops after the redistribution of the land while the land owners under the previous government were allowed to collect only 40% per cent. In one county in our section it was reported by a very reliable man that taxes had increased 20 times. In some cases "back taxes," dating back for a number of years, were levied which were often more than the value of the land. If the parties could not pay this "back tax" they were arrested and held in prison until that tax was paid. Farmers complained that during 1950 they had to pay in taxes more than their land produced. I questioned that until I personally paid the taxes on three fields owned by our South Fukien Theological Seminary. We received from those three fields during 1950 a little over 1600 catties of rice and I paid a little over 1700 catties of rice in taxes. "Incredible," you say; so would I, if I

had not experienced it. Perhaps they were preparing the minds of the people so that they would be more willing to part with their land.

What happened to business? From the very beginning all businessmen in the city of Changchow reduced their stock. They were afraid to give the appearance that their business prospered for that would bring extra taxes and accusations that they were "money men." Very soon the government took over the rice business. Through police permits on the amount of stock they were allowed to handle and sell, the government gained control over other branches of business. In the city of Changchow most of the very best businessmen in the larger business concerns were eventually arrested under various charges and given a long prison term and had their business confiscated.

One of their slogans was that they came to liberate the people, and with that they usually meant the working-man. In their emphasis of class in society, in a classless society as they called it, the working man was given first place instead of third which he held under the old Chinese order. However, in fact the working man has nothing to say, and usually has no work. Where everyone is afraid lest he be considered a rich man, no one dares build; no one dares to repair his house; no one dares to hire help, with the result that the working man has no work. Therefore the laboring man's work depended upon the government and the Party. Without them they usually could get no work. With traveling controlled by police passes, they could not leave for other places to find work. During all my stay in China I never saw the working men living on a lower scale than they were during the 18 months under Communist rule.

No article on Communism in China is complete without a paragraph on "brain washing." It is an extreme form of indoctrination, a systematic effort to break down a man's beliefs and convictions through various extreme means of physical and mental torture so as to make him accept the Communist's ideas and policies. Indoctrination seemed to have the top priority. Everybody was organized—young and old, city and country—and all organizations seemed to be for the purpose of "top" control and for indoctrination. Every group had definite periods for indoctrination. The bankers had to be at the bank for a two hours' daily indoctrination before they opened for business. If anyone resisted indoctrination too long, or showed no interest in the program he became a party for "brain washing." If "brain washing" did not break them, they were often accused of being reactionaries, put in prison, given a public trial and taken to the outskirts of the city and shot. No one knew just what went on behind the prison walls, but we did know that the prison was too small and that houses were commandeered in various parts of the city and used for prisons.

All this "brain washing" and indoctrination was largely carried out under a police force. I would call it a police state. In the city of Changchow we had three police headquarters. They seemed to be three different organizations. And these did not include the secret police, who would appear anywhere at any time with the

result that everyone was living in daily and nightly fear. In the middle of the night several blocks would be surrounded by police and then a systematic house to house search carried out. On our way out of China we had to stay in a Swatow hotel for five nights. During that time we and our room were twice searched between 12 and 2 at night. People in America have no idea under what daily fear people live in a police state!

The attitude and treatment of the individual is one which alone condemns the entire program of Communism. It is the result of their stand on religion as atheists. It is at this point that Communism and Christianity are farthest apart and where they can never meet. Under Communism the individual as such does not count. He exists only for the good and for the advancement of the state—which in reality is the Communist Party. Therefore the individual becomes a good or a bad man to the extent that he cooperates or does not cooperate with the wish of the Communist Party, irrespective of God and God's law. There is no neutral ground. We believe in the dignity of the individual which no one has the right to debase. Under Christianity the individual, created in the image of God, has his personal rights and freedom which God has given him and which no state or party has a right to take from him. God has a personal relationship with each individual, and, having created him in his own image, has given him a right and freedom of personal relationship with him. God values each individual. I question that any government, be it state or party, has a right to exist unless it exists for the good of the individuals.

This attitude of the Communist Party toward the individual has caused them to arrest thousands upon thousands, fill the prisons, "brain wash," give public trials, and then shoot them. It is hard for us to comprehend such actions. It is best expressed by the Communists themselves. After they had taken over, they said, "Russia had to execute over 12,000,000 in order to establish Communism. Her population is far less than China's. We can therefore execute from 40,000,000 to 50,000,000 to establish Communism here, and if we succeed it will be worth it." You say, "Horrible and impossible!" So would I, if I had not spent eighteen months under Communism in action.

There is no room for Christianity or for any religion, in spite of all talk of freedom of religion under a Communist society and rule as we saw it in action in China. They and their actions are directly opposed to what Christianity stands for. Truth is no longer truth as we know it. Honesty is no longer honesty as we know it. Almost all the virtues as we know them revealed in the Scriptures are no longer virtues but weaknesses. There is no compromise and no neutral ground. There is no room for a neutral position where Communism is in action. You are either in favor of their program, or you are a reactionary, and to be a reactionary is a crime. If there had been some room for a neutral position many of our missionaries would still be in China today, but they were all either forced out or arrested irrespective of race or nationality. Religion and freedom are not wanted where Communism is in action.

Seminary Highlights

The students at Western Seminary during this last school year have been the transition classes. For the first time we have been on a "quarter," instead of a "semester" basis. This past year has also seen the razing of the seminary buildings, but we have also seen that "stone walls do not a seminary make." Accepting the gracious invitation of Hope College, we have had classes in the science building, Van Raalte Hall, and Hope Chapel, and also in the Social Room in Zwemer Hall. We have slushed through the snow, we have run through the rain, we have hiked through the hail. In spite of some confusion and inconvenience, examination week brought to a close another successful year at Western Theological Seminary.

The Social Room was the scene of many interesting and educational meetings of the Adelpic Society during the year. On April 6 Dr. A. Pieters (one of our retired professors, who had just returned from a Florida vacation) spoke to us on the problems of "Divorce." The following week Western played host to the students of Calvin Seminary in an inter-seminary meeting. Dr. D. Ivan Dykstra, '38, delivered the address on the subject, "Christianity and Social Responsibility." The Rev. J. Hogenboom, '28, was our guest on April 20th and he brought us up to date on the matters of church extension. As in previous years, we have been fortunate to have an exchange student on the campus this year in the person of Paul Diez. At the April 27th meeting he was our speaker and showed us slides of the churches in Germany and how they are meeting the needs of Germany today. A tradition established the past few years requires our president as speaker for our spring picnic meeting at Camp Geneva. Dr. Mulder delivered an interesting talk on some past events that have transpired in and around Lake Michigan and also gave us some sound advice concerning our future tasks in the ministry. It has been a wonderful year of fellowship and once again the Adelpic Society has filled a need and played an important role in the life of the seminary. Special thanks and commendation go to the president, Cecil Martins, and vice-president Robert Bos, for a job well done. We should not close without a word of thanks (and a vote of confidence) to our KP sergeant and coffee (?) maker, our social chairman, Neil Van Heest.

The Holland Evening Sentinel this year featured the 25th anniversary of Tulip Time. This silver anniversary edition included an excellent article on "The History of Western Theological Seminary" which was written by a member of our faculty, Professor Elton M. Eenigenburg.

The building program is progressing ahead of schedule and if all goes well, we should be using parts of the new structure by the second quarter of next year. At 2:00 P.M. on May 19th, the cornerstone was laid with the address being delivered by the Rev. Peter A. De Jong, '31, pastor of the First Church of Sioux Center, Iowa. The service was in charge of the Rev. J. Blaauw, '28, the president of the Board of Trustees, who also supervised the material placed in the copper box and the laying of the stone. A quartet of senior students furnished the music.

As the years go by the classes at Western continue to grow larger. More than forty new students are to be with us in the junior class next year.

On Friday afternoon, May 14th, the Honors Assembly was held. Our congratulations go to the following students who received awards.

The George N. Makely prizes for sermon content were given to Glen O. Peterman, first, and Don Bruggink and Eugene Heideman, seconds; for sermon delivery to Eugene Heideman and Glen O. Peterman, firsts, and Don Bruggink and Richard Decker, seconds; for New Testament to Charles J. Wissink, first, and Paul R. Meyerink, second; for Old Testament to Neal Mol, first, and Burrell Pennings, second; and for Systematic Theology to Eugene Heideman.

The S. Vander Ploeg prizes in Church History were given to Garret A. Wilterdink, first, and Isaac C. Rottenberg, second.

The Lewis De Kleine prizes in English Bible were given to David John Hager, first, and Burrell Pennings, second.

The H. W. Pietenpol prize for general excellence in the senior class was given to Glen O. Peterman.

The commencement exercises of Western Theological Seminary were held in the Hope College Memorial Chapel, May 19th, at 8:00 P.M. The address was given by Dr. Bernard J. Mulder, '22, the secretary of the Board of Education, on the subject, "The Foolishness of God." The alumni banquet was held in Trinity Reformed Church of Holland during the afternoon of the same day. Dr. Dirk Dykstra, '14, a veteran of foreign missionary service, was the speaker.

In the days following the commencement exercises the student body left the "dear old town of Holland, Michigan" and journeyed to points far and wide to begin their service for Christ and his Church. The senior class left the seminary for the last time as students and are now serving their first charges. The graduating class and their fields of service are:

Stuart Blauw, Trinity Church, Grand Haven, Michigan.

Hendrik J. Boekhoven, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

John Boender, U.S. Army, Chaplain.

Donald Bruggink, Graduate Study, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Richard Decker, Hope Church, Montevideo, Minnesota.

Paul Diez, Nurmberg, Germany.

Jacob Dykstra, Whitby, Ontario, Canada.

James Hakken, Undecided.

Eugene Heideman, Graduate Study, Utrecht, Netherlands.

Arthur Homberg, Onesequethaw Church, Feura Bush, N. Y.

Alvin Hospers, Pultneyville Church, Williamson, New York.

Paul Hostetter, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

Henry Jager, Gray Hawk Church, Gray Hawk, Kentucky.

Aaron Koskamp, Dover Church, Courtenay, North Dakota.

Paul Kranendonk, Second Church, Marion, New York.

Kenneth Leestma, Lincoln Avenue Community Church, Pomona, California.

Donald Lenderink, U. S. Navy, Chaplain.

Cecil Martins, First Church, Lodi, New Jersey.

Edwin Mulder, English Neighborhood Church, Ridgefield, New Jersey.

Donald Nienhuis, Montana First, Conrad, Montana.

Glen Peterman, People's Park Church, Paterson, New Jersey.

Jerold Pomp, Bethel Church, Davis, South Dakota.

John Staal, First Church, Slayton, Minnesota.

Duane Tellinghuisen, Baileyville Church, Baileyville, Illinois.

Dean Veltman, U. S. Navy, Chaplain.

Raymond Weiss, Michigan C. E. Secretary.

Book Reviews

The New Bible Commentary, Edited by F. Davidson, London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1953. Pp. 1199. 35s.

This single volume commentary on the whole Bible was produced by the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. The work has been done under the direction of Dr. Francis Davidson, Professor of Old Testament and New Testament Language and Literature, United Original Secession Church of Scotland and Principal of the Bible Training Institute of Glasgow. He was assisted by Principal E. F. Kevan of the London Bible College, and Vice-Principal A. M. Stibbs of Oak Hill Theological College of London.

The majority of the contributors are British students. Several men from our own country took part in the work. Among the writers who are already known because of previous writings are, G. C. Aalders of the Netherlands who has an article on the historical literature of the Old Testament, O. T. Allis, formerly of Westminster Seminary, who writes on Leviticus, E. J. Young of Westminster who has contributed the commentary on Daniel, and F. F. Bruce who has done the work on Judges, The Acts of the Apostles, I and II Thessalonians and a joint authorship of two articles.

The book is divided into three parts—General articles, The Old Testament, The New Testament.

The first of the articles, "The Authority of Scripture," may well be taken as the point of view held by most of the authors. Scripture is approached as the infallible Word of God. One should not, however, come to a conclusion that therefore these men are not cognizant of the usual critical problems. They do attempt to deal with these within the limited framework of the book.

The second article by the late Dr. Lamont on revelation and inspiration is excellent. To give some idea of Dr. Lamont's thinking let me quote a few paragraphs. "Revelation is generally conceived in an abstract way as a concept to be studied with a view to the formulation of a doctrine. But there is no doctrine of revelation in the Bible. The Bible is the record of actual revelation, always concrete and realistic. In revelation, God acts. In our Lord's own words: 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work' John 5:17. But in revelation his work has one special purpose, namely the redemption of a world which has sold itself to sin. A true doctrine of revelation must therefore, be derived from what God has wrought for the redemption of mankind. Revelation, since it means divine activity directed to human redemption, should be regarded as an organism with a heart and center. That center is 'the self-movement of God' in his son Jesus Christ." On inspiration he has these words: "From the point of view of thought, what puts the Bible in a place by itself among books is that it does not treat the truth about God and man as a static and otiose entity waiting to be discovered by man's intelligence. It regards the truth as coming into being through the intercourse of persons, and above all, by the intercourse of God and man, God always taking the initiative. 'The truth came into being by Jesus Christ' is the right rendering of the closing words of John 1:17. We must not linger over this profound conception of the truth. Suffice it to say that the most hopeful element in the thought of our time is that the biblical conception is now coming into its own."

There are other articles dealing with the several types of literature of the Old Testament, The Fourfold Gospel, The Primitive Church, and The Pauline Epistles.

Each author introduces his commentary with some background material. This material varies as to value. Some are

rather complete in this respect, others scanty. Corinthians—both letters are done by W. C. G. Proctor—has introductory paragraphs on Paul's contact with Corinth, the number of his visits, date, purpose, the church at Corinth, two letters or three, and the teaching of the epistles.

Every writer has endeavored to give an outline of the book at hand. This is undoubtedly a helpful feature for students, in spite of the fact that many books do not lend themselves to a clear outline.

In order to conserve space, the editors have omitted the text itself. Comments are made on specific sections or units of thought. In a few books, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, points of special interest have been treated in a number of appendices.

Sketch maps and tables have been included where these would aid in the study of the text.

The writers, and especially is this true of those writing on the prophets, do have an appreciation for the Kingdom of God and its coming in Jesus Christ. There is no attempt to try to impose on Scripture an eschatology which has no reference to the church. An understanding of the role of apocalyptic literature in the work of the prophets is very evident. Zechariah by G. N. M. Collins may be cited as an example.

A. M. Stibbs in his work on Hebrews shows a keen appreciation and understanding of the Old Testament concept of the exodus together with the benefits which it bestowed and the obligations which it required. So with the greater exodus accomplished in Christ there are the obligations of faith and duty, and the opportunity to inherit the divine promise.

A work such as this always suffers from lack of space. Such information as can be placed in a few pages is hardly enough to give the layman an adequate treatment. The theological student can readily fill in any gaps or digest the theological terms. The layman must be given information in language he can understand. This is no criticism of the work, simply a realistic observation.

This work will undoubtedly be of value to the minister who must often do his work in a minimum amount of time. He will find here a commentary well suited to his needs. One might add that the price 35s (\$4.90) for a one volume commentary of 1200 pages is extremely reasonable.

—LAMBERT PONSTEIN.

The Kingdom of God, by John Bright, New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press: 1953. Pp. 288. \$3.75.

Biblical scholars during recent times have been especially concerned to relate all of the Bible to one central theme. Some have made the *kerygma* i.e., the declaration of God's redemption through Christ, the center to which the entire Scripture is bound. Professor Bright in this book uses another phrase prominent in biblical studies, viz., the history of the Kingdom of God frequently spoken of as *Heilgeschichte*. It is around this theme that the author collects biblical data for the essential comprehensive understanding of the Bible.

The author is professor of Hebrew and interpretation of the Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond. It is apparent that he has kept abreast with biblical studies and consequently is able to produce a book of high scholarship which appraises every shade of interpretation with forthrightness and fair-mindedness. In addition the book is readable which in part stems from the author's concern for and interest

in the proper ministry and witness of the Church. These features give ample reason for his receiving the 1952 Abingdon-Cokesbury special award.

The book begins at the dawn of Israel's national life, The Exodus. The date is set in the second half of the thirteenth century, which is now rightly considered more tenable in the light of biblical and archaeological data than the fifteenth century date. The author hurries through the early stages of Israel's life to get at the prophets' teaching about the kingdom, for it is through the prophets, all of them, that the essential nature of the Kingdom of God is known and declared. Here Bright correctly understands revelation in that God acts to establish his kingdom. The structure of that kingdom can only be understood against the background of Israel's life, a record of fidelity and apostasy, of victory and defeat, of exile and restoration, a restoration with something less than the hoped-for glory of the past. Out of this milieu the idea of the remnant, the promise of the new covenant and the mysterious Servant of the Lord emerge. All this comes to meaningful expression as Israel's prophets and poets view in retrospect the rise and fall of God's people. Here it is that God is revealing the principles of his eternal kingdom which should serve as the pattern for his people in the days to come. But alas! This revelation was but partially apprehended by Judaism of the New Testament times and—let it be added—by the Christian Church oftentimes in her history.

One is tempted to discuss many subjects raised in this book. I shall restrict myself to two—in my judgment very important—the Suffering Servant and the Old Testament-New Testament relationship.

The Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah—Professor Bright ascribes Isaiah 40-66 to a prophet of the exile as is done by other conservatives—depicts Israel's mission in terms of tragedy and defeat but also finally of triumph and victory. Bright shows that the concept of the Servant is not static but that it oscillates between the group and the individual, between the here and now and the time yet to come. Every student of this subject knows that one simple interpretation of the Servant will not suffice. Yet the author sees the consummation of the Suffering Servant in the ministry, suffering and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, the Church is the continuing incarnation of the Suffering Servant and should follow the pattern of the Servant in her ministry (pp. 150-155). At this point one would expect something of the "fellowship of suffering" with Christ as Paul speaks about it (*cf.* Rom. 8:17, Col. 1:24).

The second important theme is the relationship that binds the two Testaments together. The bond between the two is intimate and vital. Terms, such as lower and higher, or concepts of contrasts are rightly rejected in favor of expressions such as beginning and completion, hope and fulfillment. In this context one must see the uniqueness of Christ as God's redemptive "act" which brings meaning and consummation to the "acts"—the Old Testament "righteousnesses"—God accomplished in Israel. Here Bright discloses his high Christology as over against liberalism and his firm hold on history as over against Bultmannism.

In the last two chapters, "Between Two Worlds: The Kingdom and the Church," and "Even to the End of the Age," the author sets up the role of the church in the present and future ages. Here he allows his biblical data full expression. To define the church is no simple matter. In fact, the definition, if such it is, is a tension between conflicting concepts. Let me enumerate a few. The church is God's holy people yet she stands under God's judgment. The church must be active in the affairs of this world yet she must never be a captive of the forms of

this world. The church has the victory yet she is ever in persecution and defeat. Mankind in its deep longings yearns for the gospel which the church presents, yet mankind turns away from this gospel. The church must expend herself in evangelistic and missionary enterprises, yet by any of her "successful methods" the church may promote self-righteousness and pride. Let this suffice to show that the safe course is in vital tension between extremes. Tension is the opposite of ease and comfort into which the church in her humanness so easily gravitates. Bright's thesis is pre-eminently correct and we ought constantly to be reminded of it.

I would like to comment on the use of the word "peculiar" (pp. 254f). This word as given by the King James version in Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:2; I Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14 has the concept of preciousness such as in a highly prized possession. So the church is regarded by God. In the author's context I would prefer the words "unique" or "special" to avoid the unhappy connotation of "peculiar."

In fine, "Let the Church be the Church!" Professor Bright makes this cliché meaningful and challenging for our times.

—LESTER J. KUYPER.

Can We Trust Bible History? by Albertus Pieters, Grand Rapids: Society for Reformed Publications, 1954. Pp. 119. \$1.50.

This book is in no way an attempt to prove one or another of the theories of inspiration, but presents a clear and consistent answer to the question of the title. The modest aim of the author is fully realized. There should be no question when one has finished reading the book that we can trust Bible history. Bible history is not viewed as a record of mere facts but rather as the history of redemption. "The New Testament is the history of the way in which God brought the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ into the world, and the Old Testament is the history of how God prepared the way for it" (p. 119).

Students of Dr. Pieters will be grateful for the little volume since it will remind them of happy and profitable days in his classes. The evidence has been brought up to date making the argument all the more effective for a new generation, but the approach is familiar to those who know the work of the emeritus professor. This reviewer has employed with good effect those arguments which he received from Dr. Pieters fifteen years ago. There are men preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ today and laymen who are serving Christ intelligently and well because they have obtained a new confidence in the Scriptures by means of these arguments. The simplicity and non-technical nature of the work ought not to cause any one to minimize its importance. If one understands his subject he can make it clear. Dr. Pieters does. One hour spent with this little work should help any minister meet many questions which rise in the minds of thinking youth especially.

Moreover, because of the clarity and directness of the argument, this book can do much of a busy pastor's work for him. No layman able to read should have any difficulty understanding and appreciating its thrust. Churches should make this and other publications of the Society for Reformed Publications available for those who care to purchase them, and ministers should have a few copies to place in the hands of interested laymen on a loan basis. It is good for men to know that scholarship and faith are not antagonistic to one another.

The book is divided into three parts with a total of fourteen short chapters. The first part deals with a General Introduction; the second with Old Testament History; and the third with New Testament History. The testimony of men eminent in their fields is employed to show that the record of Scripture

is supported by scientific and historical discoveries. The unresolved difficulties are faced honestly. Dr. Pieters is too honest a scholar to "select" facts to prove his thesis. Nor does he expect to overcome the unbelief of the dogmatically skeptical. If one refuses to believe in miracles on a priori grounds, no amount of evidence can convince him.

The author provides natural explanations for many miracles. One remembers his scorn when a student would find refuge in the mysterious wonder working power of God as a cloak for his own ignorance. The professor insists that a true student of the Bible explains what can be explained. But the aim is not to reduce the miraculous to the natural, but to show that the miraculous element in Scripture is not irrational, though it may be super-rational. The point is made that one cannot differentiate between miracles. To accept one miracle is to accept the miraculous and logic demands that all Bible miracles be accepted on the record (p. 109).

The summary of the argument concerning the Old Testament declares that we had reason to trust those books because of the nature of the books themselves and because of their endorsement by our Lord and the apostles, but now we have in addition the abundant confirmation found in archaeology and other ancient sources. While the endorsement of our Lord is absent in the very nature of the case from the New Testament records, these records do have the decided advantage of being subjected to the criticism of people who lived at the time of the events related in them. The Christian Church of the first century could receive these records as true and trustworthy only because that is what they were and are. Hence we must accept them as trustworthy, and accepting them we must accept him of whom they speak, and accepting him we are ready to accept the entire Bible history.

We are grateful to a kind Providence which has kept Dr. Pieters with us these many years so that he could put into permanent form the results of many years of careful study, and to the Society for Reformed Publications for making this part of his work available to the reading public.

—RAYMOND VAN HEUKELOM.

The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar, by Nicolas Berdyaev, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952. Pp. 13-182. \$2.50.

Nicolas Berdyaev, the greatest Russian religious thinker of our times, died in 1948, but he continues to be heard through the diligent translating efforts of disciples and friends. The volume before us in this review is a translation of the last manuscript written by Berdyaev, though an earlier one will be published later. All sorts of ancient and modern influences united in the production of Berdyaev's amazingly profound thought, influences which, besides the manifestly religious, were philosophical, theosophical, political, and economic, and which drew its inspiration from such diverse sources as Origen, Neoplatonism, the mysticism of Jacob Boehme, Russian Orthodoxy, Marxism, philosophical idealism, Dostoyevsky, Soloviev, and many others. Perhaps his point of view may be best described as theosophical, but to say this is not to predetermine its content. It indicates only its flavor. Really to understand Berdyaev at all, one must read Berdyaev. Only in this way can the power of his great ideas, which are also his profound convictions, become meaningful. It is hardly possible that a Western religious thinker (defined as a product of Catholic-Protestant orthodoxy) will persuade himself that he ought to become a disciple of Berdyaev; he may, however, become a better Western religious thinker because he has subjected his mind to

the searching analyses of the nature of reality which Berdyaev has bequeathed to us.

Most of Berdyaev's books have dealt with the few themes which for years were the deep concern of this thinker, and the volume before us is no exception. The chief of these is, perhaps, Freedom; others are Spirit, Necessity, Sobornost, Theanthropy, God. Since it would be impossible, within the brief compass of this review, to consider with any fullness the whole scope of Berdyaev's thought, or even to summarize it, we shall content ourselves with a consideration of some of the main emphases of *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*. Let it be said at the outset that the volume deals with something other than what the title seems to suggest, that is, the interrelationships between church and state. Such a matter would be entirely too academic for Berdyaev. Rather, "Caesar is the eternal symbol of authority, the state, the kingdom of this world" (p. 69). On the other side are equated spirit, man's spiritual life, the Kingdom of God. A proper understanding of the dualism by which these two are related to one another provides the bases for freedom. Whenever in history the two realms have become confused with one another, or whenever the one has transgressed upon the territory of the other, only illusion has resulted, called by Berdyaev "illusions of objectivation." A case in point is the "Christian theocracy." In reality these theocracies denied freedom and Christianity was compromised. "The depth of the problem lies in this, that spirit cannot be dependent upon nature and society, nor be determined by them" (p. 71). Caesar's realm is actually of much less value than that of Spirit, and it is transient; the realm of the Spirit is everlasting. "Caesar belongs to the objectivized world: he is subject to necessity. But Spirit belongs to the realm of freedom" (p. 73). It can be seen from the foregoing that the terms "Caesar" and "Spirit" have considerably wider connotations than is commonly given them, that though they do have a kind of practical connection in empirical history, the duality refers basically to matters of cosmic significance.

It may be well to indicate, also, that Berdyaev's idea of Spirit is something other than what the church has understood by the terms, "the Divine Spirit," or "the Holy Spirit." (Berdyaev sometimes capitalizes the term, sometimes does not.) Spirit cannot be compared with other realities, as if Spirit were a being among other beings. Spirit is not being at all, but is freedom, "a qualitative changing of the data of the world," "a creative energy which transfigures the world." Spirit has God as its original source, and Berdyaev goes so far as to say that man's spiritual experience is the only proof of the existence of God (p. 32). God is Spirit, and so it is impossible to construct an ontology of God. The idea of God as being, or as a Being, is a development of abstract thought and is therefore unacceptable. God can be spoken of only in the symbolic language of spiritual experience. The possibility of speaking about God at all arises because of the existence of man. The latter is "the reflection of God's image" (p. 36), but often deforms it. Man is both finite and infinite, or "infinity in a finite form" (p. 36), which is evidenced by finite man's longing for the infinite. This is the divine in man, the human testimony of the existence of God. Man thus does not meet God in being, but in spirit, that is, in spiritual experience. In this relationship alone, and not in the objectivation occasioned by concepts of being, is freedom to be found. Berdyaev taught that the divine life is enriched when man is born in God, that man needs God and God needs man. The relationship between the two must be understood in dramatic and dynamic, not in static, terms. To conceive of God outside this relationship, that is, in the form of abstract monotheism, is to become subject to idolatry.

To this reviewer Berdyaev seems at his eloquent best, not when spinning out his mystical theories of the nature of reality, but when he inveighs against modern threats to the integrity of human personality, which are, in the nature of the case, threats to spirit and freedom. Here Caesar assumes various forms: he may be technics or scientism; he may be capitalism, or socialism, or Marxism, or anything else which mires the spirit of man in materialism or secularism. In the modern period all spheres of culture and social life have lived and developed by their own laws, this apart from any spiritual center. There is no recognition of any moral law or spiritual element higher than themselves. "Machiavellism in politics, capitalism in economics, scientism in science, nationalism in the life of peoples, the integral power of technics over man—all these are the results of those autonomies" (p. 52). Berdyaev makes profound analyses of socialism, Marxism, and capitalism, largely emphasizing their personality-destroying, and hence, their freedom-destroying aspects. Since Berdyaev was at one time a Marxist, his words on that subject deserve special attention. But his strictures on capitalism should also be given careful heed. For example, "Materialism, i.e. the absolutization of things and objects, is an inheritance from the bourgeois world-outlook. Capitalism is practical atheism" (p. 64). Berdyaev's own ideal was in the way of a triumph of "religious socialism," a system in which socialism of the best type would be subjected to religious elements and purposes. He was very much opposed to "collectivism" as such; this was simply being together. A far greater attainment than collectivism was the Russian Orthodox idea of *sobornost*, "the communion in love of the church people with the Holy Spirit" (p. 122). Freedom and the value of the person are always recognized in the kind of community indicated by *sobornost*.

It should be quite evident that Berdyaev's thought is both biblical and unbiblical, both Christian and unchristian. His deepest inspiration seems to come from the great ideas made possible by the biblical revelation, but he handles those ideas with even more subjective freedom than Origen, the one theologian in Christian history whom he most closely resembles. Berdyaev bows to no external authority, and thus the Bible is not strictly determinative for his thought. Since there is no God apart from the divine-human correlation, what God there is, in our understanding of him, is precisely what that correlation yields. He cannot be the one who says, "I am that I am," nor the one who speaks out of his own being, for he is not an objective being with an ontology all his own. Neither can he be thought of in any terms which directly posit, or indirectly imply, an objectivation of his existence. Such a God is hardly the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has been revealed in the pages of the Bible. With all his vast expenditure of energy through the years in the service of "spiritual freedom," Berdyaev reveals, in his very profundity, the terrible bondage into which the human spirit will come when it is allowed to become the judge of its own thoughts, and when the external revelation of the Word of God, in its authoritative demand upon both mind and heart, is despised. And yet we say, Berdyaev must be read, for he has the power to trouble us deeply and to make us think considerably more seriously about that freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

—ELTON M. EENIGENBURG

Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, by Ronald S. Wallace, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953. Pp. xii—253. 18s.

To the large number of recent studies made in John Calvin this volume is a helpful addition. The subject is an important

one in the Reformer's theology and Wallace's conclusions seem to be based on a careful collation of passages from the *Commentaries*, *Institutes*, and other writings. The book is another proof of the importance of the *Commentaries* if one is to understand Calvin, for he was a Biblical theologian and one finds in them *in extenso* what he reads in summary in the *Institutes*. Wallace does not give us a critical study but an exposition of his subject. He begins his discussion with five chapters on Calvin on revelation; then there is a like number on Calvin's conception of the Word, and that is followed by eight chapters on the sacraments.

There is nothing startlingly new in this volume for anybody who has done a substantial amount of reading in Calvin. The well-conceived outline and careful documentation, however, do impress upon one the fullness and startlingly modern nature of the Reformer's treatment. It is full in that almost every phase of the relevant problems is treated somewhere in his commentaries or elsewhere; and it is modern in that many of the emphases which have been and are being made in our day, and have been received by some as though they were completely new discoveries, are but a restatement of positions held in Calvin's writings. Let us look at a few of them.

That which has most contributed to the theological renaissance of the last decades is the rediscovery of the Bible as the Word of God, and in this rediscovery a few facts have received great emphasis. One of these is the centrality of Christ, or, as many would insist on saying, the exclusiveness of Christ, in revelation. He is the sole mediator of revelation in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Karl Barth and the authors of a number of essays in the World Council symposium *Biblical Authority for Today*, to mention just some of the many striking instances that could be cited, come to mind here.

Wallace shows convincingly that Calvin held the position that Christ is the sole mediator of revelation in both Testaments (pp. 8ff, 42ff, 61ff). He who doubts should check the references and read them in context, as this reviewer did. Wallace says, "No attempt must be made to supplement this revelation by turning away from Christ, even for a moment, to explore other sources of knowledge which might be supposed to have something to say and to give us that might enrich us further" (p. 62). "So complete, unique and exclusive is the revelation which God gives of Himself in Christ that it is not only madness to forsake it for any other source of knowledge but also the most base ingratitude, and a robbery from Christ of His Glory" (p. 64). Wallace admits, contrary to Barth and others, that Calvin taught general revelation (pp. 65f), "that the rays of Christ are diffused throughout the whole creation," and that Calvin "even suggests that pagan culture and religion owe much to Christ" (p. 66). But, because of sin, we can never be led to God thereby. The question that we have concerning this section of the book is whether the Christological emphasis is given at the expense of adequate emphasis on the revelatory activity of God the Father and the Holy Spirit which are also given prominence in Calvin.

Another constant motif of much contemporary theological literature is its emphasis on the unity of revelation. The representative references cited above could be invoked here as well as many other recent writings. Wallace, inspired by Calvin, has two chapters on the subject. The uniqueness of revelation is another note being struck frequently in our time. Some would say that this is contemporary theology's theme song. Wallace devotes a chapter to setting forth Calvin's position.

Although talk of a "moratorium on preaching" may still be alive in some circles, the sacred art has been receiving encouragement in many quarters since Barth delivered his ad-

dress on "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching," given in 1922 and published in the volume *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Barth spoke of "the air of expectancy that something great, crucial and even momentous is to happen" when a man stands up to speak the Word of God. Calvin, interpreted by Wallace, had the same dynamic conception (pp. 82f). The chapter on preaching could well be read by every *verbi divini minister*, although a still more profitable discussion of Calvin on the subject might be T. H. L. Parker's *The Oracles of God*, especially pp. 45ff. One may come from such discussions with the combined feeling of exhilaration and of being a *dud* in his own efforts to preach the "unsearchable riches."

The last half of the book, on the sacraments, was most rewarding to this reader. Those of us who are half-Zwinglian in our doctrine of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, perhaps never having read Calvin's *Commentaries*, if we have read the *Institutes* or a good discussion of the Reformer on the subject, ought to read Wallace's discussion. It is superb. The chapter on "The Sacraments of the New Covenant as Signs and Seals" shows Calvin's appreciation of these rites as signs of God's grace comparable to the miracles performed in the Old Testament and in the early Church, and seals of the Word preached. The sacraments take "the important place which miracles and visions and dreams and all the visible phenomena by means of which God revealed Himself had in the Old Testament times" (p. 137). The key chapter in the entire discussion on the sacraments is entitled "The Mystery of Sacramental Union." It is shown therein that Calvin held that "the function of the sacraments is not merely to produce a healthy psychological effect by depicting to the eyes doctrines and facts that must not be forgotten, but to be the instruments of a gracious divine action whereby what is represented to us is also presented to us" (p. 160). "The sacraments thus deserve to be ranked along with the Word as true means of grace, and along with the Word of the Gospel can be called the *power of God unto salvation*" (*ibid.*).

The meaning of the Supper to Calvin is seen to be exceedingly rich. As Baptism signifies the reality of our grafting into Christ and cleansing, so the Supper is a real reception of Christ. Calvin agreed with the Lutherans and the Roman Church that the flesh of Christ was offered and received no less than his Spirit so that believers are given the whole Christ (p. 199). However, Calvin insisted, in opposition to these others, that the body of Christ remained in heaven and that communion with him was through the Holy Spirit by whom he, the whole Christ, was received in faith. Wallace takes considerable pains to show that in Calvin's doctrine the Supper was no mere memorial, but an actual communion with and reception of the Saviour (pp. 203ff, 211ff), and that he felt that his doctrine was Biblical. Omitting, for the sake of space, discussion of Calvin's repudiation of Zwingli's over-simplified perversion of the Supper, we note that Calvin felt the Lutheran doctrine was absurd in that it taught that the body of Christ could exist without definite dimensions or space (pp. 221f). The Lutheran notion that Christ's body is given with the bread even to unbelievers was one of the "absurdities abhorrent to piety." And, if Christ's body is now invisible and omnipresent so that it can be locally present in the sacrament, does this imply such a change in our bodies, since his resurrection and glorification was a pattern and the first-fruits of ours (p. 224)? Furthermore, the ascension and second coming of Christ mean that Christ has left this earth and that some day he will come again. Wallace shows that for Calvin these events had deep meaning whereas for Lutheranism the advent will be merely

"the visible revelation of what has been present in this world all the time in a hidden way" (p. 226). In the very nature of a sacrament as a sign our minds are directed away from it to the divine reality which it signifies. "Hence any doctrine of the sacraments that fixes the attention of men on the elements, thus 'withdrawing the minds of men from heaven' and preventing this lifting up of the hearts of the participants, is a triumph for the 'wiles of Satan,' who wishes nothing more than to tie the minds of men to earthly things and to prevent them from rising into true communion with God" (p. 228).

Covering, as it does, a wide field of study, the volume before us is brief in some respects. Chapter eight on "The Written Word as the Word of God" is unsatisfying in its brevity. It would be better to have Calvin's doctrine of inspiration untreated than to dispose of it in such brief space. But, if the book is weak here it is excellent elsewhere and will give the spiritual son of the Genevan Reformed new insights and inspiration.

—M. Eugene Osterhaven.

BOOK NOTES

Jesus Christ and His Cross, by F. W. Dillistone, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953. Pp. 143. \$2.50.

In this volume the author presents a series of chapters on the saving work of Christ. He discusses such great themes as: The Mystery of the Cross; The Savior-Hero; The Great Shepherd of the Sheep; The Son Who Was Not Spared; The Sin Bearer; The Great High Priest; The Servant of the Lord; The Glory of the Cross.

The author develops the thesis that the cross of Christ is "The supreme illustration of the divine capacity to remain untouched by the most savage designs of human cruelty" (p. 17). The book is valuable for ministers who seek to prepare a series of Lenten sermons, as well as for devotional reading for laymen.

God's Order, by John A. Mackay, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953. Pp. xii-214. \$3.00.

This book contains the substance of the Croall Lectures, which Dr. Mackay delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1948. By "God's Order" is meant the structure of spiritual reality, which has its beginning in God and whose development is determined by God. God's Order exists in the Christian Church, although it is imperfect. This "Order" is presented by the Apostle Paul in his monumental letter to the Ephesians.

Dr. Mackay does not seek to present a commentary on Ephesians in the traditional sense. He discusses the following subjects: I—Perspectives. II—The Great Rift. III—God's Unveiled Secret. IV—The Victory Which Christ Wrought. V—New Men in Christ. VI—The New Divine Order. VII—The Fullness of Christ. VIII—The Four Imperatives of Christian Living. IX—Christian Action On the Frontiers of Strife.

Oral Tradition, by Eduard Nielsen, Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1954. Pp. 108.

This book is the eleventh in the series of *Studies in Biblical Theology* and continues the high standard of previous studies.

The thesis of the book is that oral tradition largely prevailed in Israel and that it was committed in writing in post-exilic times. Oral tradition undoubtedly was much used in ancient Israel. The author produces abundant data for this. However, the written tradition, which is well recognized in the book, is given a too subsidiary role. Examples of the traditio-historical method (chap. IV) are interesting but not convincing. Surely, studies in Old Testament traditions and backgrounds are still living issues.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Seminary Convocation Conference September 7-10, 1954
Camp Geneva, Holland, Michigan

The seminary is pleased to invite pastors and their wives to attend this conference. Because of the World Council of Churches Assembly we have been able to obtain outstanding speakers. The program is as follows:

Dr. J. C. Hoekendijk, Professor of Practical Theology of the University of Utrecht and Secretary of the Commission on Evangelism, World Council of Churches.

Pastor Martin Niemoeller from Berlin-Dahlem, Germany, well-known for his Christian witness in Germany. Mrs. Niemoeller will also be present. She too is an able speaker.

Dr. Marcel Pradervand, Executive Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva.

Professors Elton M. Eenigenburg and D. Ivan Dykstra, delegates to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, will conduct a seminar.

We strongly urge all to make plans to attend this unusual conference for inspiration and Christian fellowship.

Details will be sent out during the summer. For information write Conference Committee, Western Seminary, Holland, Michigan.

